

CDC children excel at ‘Jurassic’ project

Story by
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APG News

When challenged to come up with creative dinosaur-themed projects as part of the educational program in the Edgewood Area Child Development Center’s pre-kindergarten program, the children in Classroom 4 exceeded all expectations. The result was a class and playroom so full of dinosaur decorations, artifacts and information that it’s become known as ‘The Dinosaur Room.’

Chantay Averett, program lead, and program assistants Quitta Harden and Bertha Robinson, guided the room’s pre-schoolers through the annual learning process that challenges children to not only learn but to share with others all they can about a designated subject.

Averett said that although this was not the first year the program focused on dinosaurs, it was the first time parent participation was encouraged.

“They had to take the project home and they had two weeks to work on it,” she said.

Along with the take-home projects dinosaur-themed decorations dominate the children’s classroom and play area. The shelves are filled with books on dinosaurs and plastic dinosaur toys. There are dinosaur footprints on the floor, paper jungle vines hang from the ceiling and a large poster on one wall lists everything each child knows about dinosaurs.

The room’s main attractions are paper mache displays--the results of the children’s take-home projects. Some include photographs detailing each step of their project’s construction.

The room has become so popular that Averett calls it ‘The Museum’ and has posted a ‘Museum’ sign with visiting hours on the door.

“We’ve had a lot of people pass through,” she said. “When kids come in with their parents, they want to go straight to the dinosaur room.”

Averett said feedback from the parents who participated in the project was very positive.

“A lot of parents said they had fun. This was a good way to get them involved, and some said that now they talk more with their kids about their day,” she said.

Averett enhances the dinosaur experience by inviting guests to talk about the subject.



John R. (Rick) Smith, of the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense uses dinosaur figurines to demonstrate to children in the Edgewood Area Child Development Center’s pre-kindergarten program the types of creatures that once roamed the earth. Looking on from left are Anya Chervak, Marisol Macias, Abigail Guicheteau and Aaliyah Rodriguez.

John R. (Rick) Smith, a chemist with the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense, visited the class three times to talk about paleontology and show the children fossils and other artifacts.

“It’s one subject kids just really grab,” Smith said. “Each time, I’m amazed at how well they pick things up.”

Smith was invited to speak to the children by Heidi Hoard-Fruchey, an MRICD contractor and special event coordinator with the Parent Child Care Association, PCCA.

With two children enrolled in the CDC, Hoard-Fruchey said the PCCA tries to “bring in activities for children to help with educational programs.”

“We appreciate his time and resources,” she said of Smith. “And we found the children’s creativity amazing. I credit the staff for instructing and inspiring such creativity in these children.”



A hungry paper mache brontosaurus, the result of a take-home project by Michael P., munches on confetti tree leaves in the pre-kindergarten ‘Dinosaur Room’ at the Edgewood Area Child Development Center.